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# **Sub-Saharan Africa: Growing Iranian Activity**

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**A Research Paper**

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*ALA 84-10119  
December 1984*

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## **Sub-Saharan Africa: Growing Iranian Activity**

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**A Research Paper**

This paper was prepared by [redacted]  
Office of African and Latin American Analysis, with  
contributions by [redacted] Office of Near  
Eastern and South Asian Analysis, and [redacted]  
[redacted] Office of Central Reference.

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Comments and queries are welcome and may be  
directed to the Chief, Regional Issues Branch,  
Africa Division, ALA, [redacted]

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### Sub-Saharan Africa: Growing Iranian Activity

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#### Key Judgments

*Information available  
as of 29 November 1984  
was used in this report.*

Iran's policies toward black Africa have entered an activist phase over the past 30 months reflecting, in our view, both the consolidation of the Islamic regime of Ayatollah Khomeini and Tehran's broader foreign policy goals. We believe Tehran is pursuing an aggressive campaign for three main purposes:

- To win support for its foreign policies, particularly its war with Iraq.
- To enhance its international legitimacy by expanding its formal diplomatic relationships.
- To spread its revolutionary ideology.

The record shows that Iran has begun to build networks of sympathizers among Muslim fundamentalist groups, Lebanese communities, and universities in the region. Iranian revolutionary propaganda has found an audience among Muslim radical fundamentalists who admire Khomeini's strict interpretation of the Koran and his revolutionary theology. In northern Nigeria, for example,

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Iranian delegations and embassy personnel are recruiting and introducing their propaganda at the universities. In Senegal,

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Tehran has been providing financial support to an active group of followers and funding to local publications.

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Tehran has given a high priority to Africa even though the Muslim communities there are mostly Sunni. Shias—adherents of the branch of Islam that is dominant in Iran—are found mainly in Lebanese and Asian expatriate communities in the Sub-Saharan region. The targets of Tehran's campaign, we believe, are both established governments and the conservative religious leadership that traditionally has spoken for the majority of African Muslims.

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Tehran already has made some, albeit limited, political gains in Sub-Saharan Africa over the past two years:

- Iran now has 18 embassies in the region, compared to less than half that number two years ago.
- A number of African governments have welcomed Iran's offers of concessionary oil prices and financial assistance, and in some cases (Sierra Leone and Ghana) have been willing to upgrade political relations in return.

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These inroads have not come easily. Tehran has been forced to cope with Shia-Sunni sectarian differences, conflicts between radical and conservative Islamic fundamentalists, and a host of other cultural and political

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crosscurrents. Most African leaders are taking steps to blunt Tehran's campaign, fearing it could upset the fragile political balance in their countries. Governments also worry that closer ties to Iran could jeopardize essential assistance from Western and Arab sources which are mainstays of their economies. Conservative Muslims are apprehensive that radical fundamentalist activities will undermine their leadership. [REDACTED]

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Iran's efforts to extend its influence in black Africa have been made even more difficult by the historical antipathy between most Arabs and the Persians of Iran. Thus, some Arab states—notably Saudi Arabia and Iraq—have sought to block the spread of Iranian influence in Africa, which they consider a threat to their own interests in the region. Libya, by contrast, has encouraged some of Tehran's activities, which have goals that are compatible with its own revolutionary program. [REDACTED]

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There is as yet no evidence that Iran has developed a terrorist capability in Africa or has made inroads into the conservative majority of Africa's Muslim populations. [REDACTED] government spokesmen and resident diplomats from conservative Arab and Western states are concerned that Iranian-trained terrorists plan to sabotage embassies and government installations. [REDACTED]

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Iran's activist policies are clearly aimed at challenging Western interests in Africa. Khomeini's message is framed in terms hostile to the West and to the United States in particular. Fundamentalist and xenophobic zealots in Africa admire Khomeini's policy of condemning and excising the influence of outside governments. While we do not expect Tehran to attain significant influence in the region any time soon, over the longer term Iran's radical message may provoke Islamic terrorism or add to already existing restiveness among some Islamic groups. [REDACTED]

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Although Tehran's campaign thus far speaks mainly to select elements of African society, impressionable youth groups may come to respond more actively to Islamic radical fundamentalism, creating pressures for new political institutions and reopening longstanding ethnic and religious jealousies that could provoke unrest and violence. We see a significant increase in radical Islamic activity in Africa, therefore, as a potential threat to political stability as well as a possible opening for increased Iranian influence. [REDACTED]

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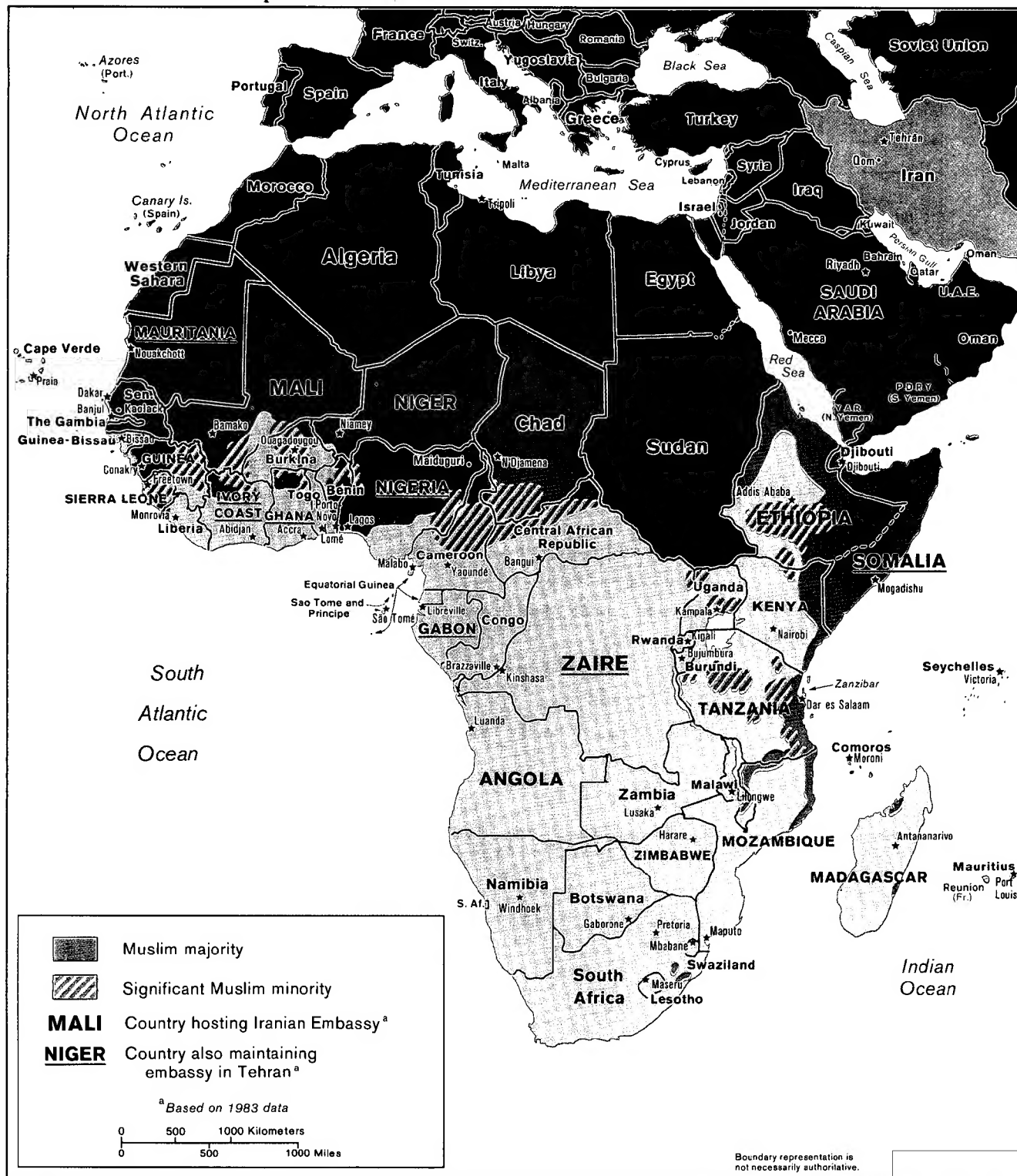
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**Figure 1**  
**Muslim Distribution and Diplomatic Ties with Iran in Sub-Saharan Africa**



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## Sub-Saharan Africa: Growing Iranian Activity

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### Introduction

Tehran is one of the three centers of power in the Muslim world—with Riyadh and Tripoli—competing for leadership in black Africa. Each has subsidized an international organization designed to enlist agents and to disseminate propaganda. According to some scholarly observers, Libyan leader Qadhafi's Islamic Call Society is now the weakest of the three: its revolutionary appeal is being superseded by Iran's network of agents and sympathizers in Africa. The Saudis, however, continue to be the source of African Islam's principal external support.<sup>1</sup>

we believe Tehran has assigned black Africa a high priority in its campaign for international recognition because of the large number of countries there with Muslim populations, and because Iranian foreign policymakers believe that black African political systems have not evolved far beyond colonial models and therefore are ripe for revolution. Tehran's goals are often mutually incompatible, however—they seek to turn local Muslim populations against both conservative Muslim leaders and some of the same governments from which Tehran seeks diplomatic support.

Despite its extensive efforts, we believe Iran has to date achieved only limited success. Tehran has been hampered by the hostility of African government officials and by the indifference on the part of many African Muslims to its revolutionary theology.

This paper sketches Iran's overall policy toward black Africa and the apparatus through which this policy is carried out, analyzes the patterns of Iranian involvement, and assesses Tehran's prospects. It also discusses possible consequences for US interests if Iran were able to successfully increase the influence of its revolutionary doctrine in the region.

### Spreading Khomeini's Gospel

A key dimension of Iran's political campaign in black Africa is the export of its revolutionary theology and encouragement of a fundamentalist Islamic revival in the region. According to press reports, the Iranians seek to overcome differences between Sunni and Shia Muslims and to foment a popular return to Islam and rejection of Western secular influences by means such as those that led to the overthrow of the Shah.

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#### A Revolutionary Model

Many African Muslims, as well as other Africans, view the Iranian revolution of 1979 as a victory of popular forces against a corrupt and repressive regime supported by the Western powers, according to a variety of press and scholarly sources. Fundamentalist and xenophobic zealots in Africa admire Khomeini's policy of condemning and excising the influence of outside governments. They too blame Western influences for the breakup of the traditional extended family and for the pervasive secular emphasis on the material over the spiritual.

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Khomeini's reputation, we believe, has proved to be a valuable asset in attracting African followers among students and radical fundamentalists. Africa has yet to produce a preeminent Islamic personality, and no other contemporary Muslim figure can equal Khomeini's ability to capture popular emotions. His message has appealed to Africans dissatisfied with the economic and political inequities that have widened in the postindependence era. Indeed, diplomatic reporting and press accounts underscore this fact:

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- Numerous delegations of African Muslims to Iran have asked to meet Khomeini.
- His pictures have appeared throughout the African Muslim world.
- Posters with Khomeini's portrait are carried in demonstrations.
- Articles under his name appear in local newspapers.
- Collections of Khomeini's sayings in book and cassette form are widely distributed.

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### Islamic Revival in Africa

*In our judgment, the worldwide trend toward increased political activity by radical Islamic fundamentalist groups—marked by the Iranian revolution, the assassination of Anwar Sadat, and the bombing of US installations in Lebanon by the Islamic Jihad—has been paralleled on a smaller scale by a significant increase in Islamic consciousness in the Muslim communities of Sub-Saharan Africa. Despite internal divisions that dilute its political impact, Islam is expanding rapidly in the region, encouraged by a flow of population into cities where many nominal Muslims and non-Muslims are becoming ardent converts to fundamentalist beliefs.* [redacted]

*African Muslims today number some 120 million—nearly 15 percent of all Muslims in the world—most living in 27 states south of the Sahara. The greatest concentration is in West Africa—Nigeria alone has nearly 45 million Muslims, about half of its population.* [redacted]

*West Africa is also the site of the highest level of radical Muslim activity on the subcontinent. During the past five years the followers of a heretical Muslim leader in northern Nigeria have provoked serious outbreaks of violence that have taken several thousand lives and tested the federal government's authority. Small fundamentalist groups in Senegal, Ivory Coast, and Sierra Leone have also caused official anxiety but have yet to attract national followings.* [redacted]

*The Muslim revival so far has been an untidy, disorganized, sometimes violent movement often marked by dissension among Muslims divided into hostile camps. These include conservative Sufi brotherhoods, austere militant fundamentalist groups, and heretical fringe groups.* [redacted]

*Sufi leaders rarely resort to revolutionary activity but do grant or withhold religious support to or from existing regimes. For them the pursuit of political power is a distraction and an obstacle to the achievement of holiness. The Sufis aim to achieve holiness through mysticism, contemplation, and imitation of the Prophet's life.* [redacted]

*Militant fundamentalists, on the other hand, are often highly political. If inspired by Saudi Arabia's religious tradition, they tend to support the government in power. If they follow Khomeini's radical Shia philosophy, they are hostile to secular authority.* [redacted]

*Heretical fringe groups, such as the Maitatsine in northern Nigeria, place the group's founder on a par with Mohamed himself and are therefore considered heretical by mainline Muslims. Such groups are usually opposed to state governments because they reject all authority but that of their own leader. They often violently attack other religious groups.* [redacted]

*The greatest Islamic threat to political stability in Africa comes from radical fundamentalist groups that are still no more than a small minority but who have shown in Nigeria and other countries with large, politically active Muslim populations, the greatest potential for growth of any religious group in Africa. Their hostility to established political and religious institutions has attracted Libyan and Iranian attention and support. These groups are especially attractive to alienated Muslim students and the urban unemployed who seek simple, often violent solutions to the diverse and virtually intractable problems of West African societies.* [redacted]

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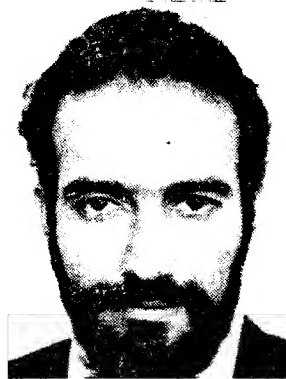
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*Iran's Policymaking Apparatus**Ali Akbar Velayati**Ali Mohammad Besharati-Jahromi**Hosein Sheikholeslam*

*Iranian policy on matters pertaining to black Africa is generally set by the Foreign Ministry, acting on the basis of the tenets of the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1978-79 and administrative guidance from senior levels of the Iranian regime. The Foreign Ministry has retained a degree of professionalism in its bureaucracy while displaying some of the revolutionary zeal expected of Iranians since the Shah's departure. Supplementing the diplomatic focus in the work of the Foreign Ministry are the endeavors of Iranian commercial and intelligence agents, the Ministry of Islamic Guidance, and the Revolutionary Guard.*

*The Foreign Ministry has been led since December 1981 by Ali Akbar Velayati, a physician by training. Ali Mohammad Besharati-Jahromi, Velayati's chief deputy since June, and Hosein Sheikholeslam, the chief officer for political affairs in the Foreign Ministry, are also influential. Both men are regarded by US officials as more radical than Velayati. Besharati-Jahromi, once a student of Khomeini's at Qom, was a schoolteacher who joined the Revolutionary Guard Command Council after the revolution and headed the Guard's intelligence operations. Sheikholeslam was the leader of the "students" who seized the US Embassy in Tehran in November 1979 and is one of the most extreme anti-Western fundamentalists within the Iranian regime,*

*Sheikholeslam's deputy overseeing Iranian relations with Arab and African states is Mohammad Hosein Lavasani, who is US educated and has probably been the Foreign Ministry's leading proponent of expanding Tehran's relations with Sub-Saharan Africa. His*

*brother, Mohammad Ali Lavasani, serves as Iran's Ambassador to Tanzania. Lavasani's directorate has separate sections for Africa north and south of Sahara; the section for black Africa is headed by Hamid Moayer. Other personnel in the Foreign Ministry are also often involved in formulating and carrying out Iranian policy toward black Africa. Deputy Foreign Minister Hosain Kazempur-Ardebili, for example, oversees directorates handling economic relations and Iranian participation in Islamic and other international conferences.*

*Iran has dispatched a number of delegations to black Africa in recent years that have not been under the auspices of the Foreign Ministry. The Ministry of Islamic Guidance sees to it that Muslim Shia principles are paramount in Iranian domestic and foreign sponsorship of such travel.*

*Assuming a reasonably coherent domestic situation in a post-Khomeini Iran, the outlook for Iran's policy apparatus in its dealings with black Africa is for few changes in the structural framework but an increasing sophistication in promoting the Islamic revolution. There is likely to be better coordination among the several relevant ministries and a less heavy-handed approach in pursuing policy objectives. That prospect would include a greater reliance on gaining long-term assets through the use of academic scholarships and military training opportunities in Iran. Tehran will probably also be less abrasive in pushing its brand of Islam among non-Shia African Muslims.*

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**Shias and Sunnis**

*The Shias and the Sunnis are the two major branches of Islam. The differences between them are not in belief or law, which, with some exceptions, are fundamentally the same for both, but in practice and political theory. The Shias broke away from the mainstream of Islam in the seventh century almost at the outset of the religion's spread. Their quarrel with the dominant Sunnis originated over the line of succession from the Prophet Mohammed. Sunnis believe any Muslim could succeed Mohammed, while Shias believe that only members of the Prophet's family were the rightful heirs.* [redacted]

*The roots of Ayatollah Khomeini's political philosophy<sup>a</sup>—particularly his central concept that religion and politics are inextricably linked—lie in a long tradition of "activist" Shia clergy who have argued the need for deep clerical involvement in politics to establish a "just" government, defining all other forms of government as illegitimate and enjoining faithful Muslims to oppose them as a religious duty. This same approach was preached by the leaders of the Muslim jihads (holy wars) in West Africa during the 19th century and has even been adopted by militant Sunni Muslims today.* [redacted]

*Shias have generally been the underdogs of the Muslim world, an oppressed, unassimilated minority*

*of about 80 million in a worldwide Islamic community of more than 900 million. More than 50 percent of the world's Shias live in Iran. Other Shias have emigrated from the Near East to India, Southeast Asia, and Africa to escape from persecution.*<sup>b</sup> [redacted]

***Shias in Africa.** There are nearly 100,000 Lebanese Shias in West Africa. Many came from southern Lebanon after the first World War, encouraged by the French and the British who wanted to create a foreign business class to play a middleman role between colonial administrations and the population. The community has grown since then, particularly in the past decade when the civil war in Lebanon brought large numbers of new immigrants to join their families, many of which were already set up in business. The Lebanese frequently forge alliances with African politicians and businessmen, providing commercial experience, capital, and international contacts in return for political protection.* [redacted]

*The Shias of East Africa, who make up the majority of the approximately 600,000 Asian Muslims living there, are mostly prosperous merchants, bankers, and tradesmen living in major cities and on the island of Zanzibar. They are less politically active than the West African Lebanese and have also avoided involvement in religious controversy.* [redacted]

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**The Clerical Network**

Judging from Iranian practices to date, much of the effort to build bridges to African Muslims rests on Tehran's development of a clerical network. Khomeini seeks to use the Muslim clergy to support his activist ideology, calling for their involvement in politics as a religious duty. During the past two years, US Embassy reporting points to the fact that groups of Iranian clergy under the direction of the Ministry of Islamic Guidance have visited Africa; contacting fundamentalist Muslim communities; conducting seminars and conferences for Muslim clerics; giving inflammatory,

highly political sermons in local mosques; and recruiting candidates for training in Iran. Moreover, Iranian theologians have been appointed as ambassadors to African posts and travel widely to make contact with African clerics on missions sometimes publicly blessed by Khomeini himself. [redacted]

The Khomeini regime has staged several widely publicized, expense-paid conferences and seminars for African Muslim clergy in both Africa and Iran. [redacted]  
[redacted] Tehran plans to establish a

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conference center in Lagos where future meetings relating to the hajj—the annual pilgrimage to Mecca—will be scheduled. Three hajj conferences have been held already under the auspices of the Organization of Islamic Unity in Freetown, Sierra Leone. This year's meeting drew representatives from Uganda, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Chad, Liberia, Guinea, Nigeria, Mauritius, Senegal, and Benin. The conferences have produced lengthy declarations, heavily laced with anti-Saudi and anti-US propaganda. [REDACTED]

Tehran also is attempting to reach the Muslim population through the medium of the Friday sermon. According to diplomatic reports, delegations from Ivory Coast, Senegal, and Nigeria, among others, have attended a series of seminars for imams<sup>2</sup> in Tehran. There, Iranian clergy give instruction in revolutionary theory and practice, including sermons on the "sin" of obedience to secular authorities. [REDACTED]

#### Lebanese Shia Ties

The existing evidence suggests that the Iranians have found Lebanese communities in Africa particularly useful allies probably in part because, like them, the Lebanese are mostly Shia Muslims. In Senegal, for example, almost 90 percent of the 20,000-member Lebanese community are Shias. Furthermore, the Lebanese, although constituting a relatively small minority group, are economically and politically powerful. Lebanese have acted as intermediaries with African governmental leaders and religious groups, particularly in West Africa where there are large, influential Lebanese communities. For example:

- The leader of the Lebanese Shia community in Ivory Coast served as promoter, guide, and interpreter for the Iranian charge in Lagos during his travels through francophone states in West Africa last year, [REDACTED]
- Lebanese living in Abidjan have interceded with government ministers and the police on behalf of Iranians trying to enter Ivory Coast without officially approved visas. [REDACTED]

<sup>2</sup> While prayers are performed daily by Muslims either individually or in groups, imams lead communal prayer on Fridays in local mosques. On these occasions the imam will preach on Koranic law and custom and may introduce political and social commentary into his text. [REDACTED]

- The Islamic Social-Cultural Institute in Dakar, under the leadership of a Lebanese Muslim cleric, is the chief point of contact for Iranian activities in Senegal. [REDACTED] 25X1
- In Sierra Leone, where there is a large—about 4,000—economically and politically powerful Lebanese community, Afro-Lebanese businessman Jamil Said Mohamed, a trusted associate of President Stevens, has taken the lead in arranging sales of Iranian oil to the Sierra Leone Government, according to US Embassy reporting. [REDACTED] 25X1

According to US diplomatic sources, not all Lebanese Shias are sanguine about the Iranian connection. Some successful Lebanese businessmen are concerned that an association with Iran could hurt their business and political connections by antagonizing foreign interests, particularly the Saudis. According to US Embassy sources, the Lebanese recognize that they are vulnerable as a racial and religious minority in Africa, and Jamil Said Mohamed himself has urged Lebanese Shia leaders in Sierra Leone to stay away from the controversial political activities of the Iranians. [REDACTED] 25X1

#### The University Network

The Iranians have also established ties to radical Muslim student groups on university campuses. Eyewitness reports indicate that several hundred students from Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Niger, and Senegal have been brought to Iran for theological indoctrination. According to press reporting, a special school has been established in Iran's theological center, the city of Qom, to provide training for African university students. [REDACTED] 25X1

We know that Iranian recruiters have been active at universities in northern Nigeria, from members of the Muslim community there. In 1983, for example, there were a half dozen Iranians—among them former Iranian diplomatic and military personnel—teaching or studying at northern campuses while actively involved with the Muslim Student Society. Sources of [REDACTED] 25X1

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the US Embassy in Lagos report that the Iranian Ambassador has traveled extensively in northern Nigeria, speaking to radical Muslim audiences at universities and mosques. In the effort to introduce Khomeini's teaching on northern campuses, Iranians have been joined by clerics from Tehran—many of whom came to Nigeria without the knowledge of Nigerian authorities—and by Nigerian students trained in Iran. US Embassy sources [ ] have reported that Iranians paid large sums of money to student groups such as the Kano University Student Union to which they gave over \$100,000 in 1983.

Muslim students on northern Nigerian campuses have been involved in demonstrations extolling Iran's revolution and demanding a purge of the political and religious leadership in the country. According to interviews in the press, this militant and idealistic fringe of Nigeria's Muslim community views Iran as a purified Islamic state that has shaken off "Western" heresies. It has attacked police and members of conservative Islamic groups, creating tensions between Christians and Muslims both on campus and in surrounding communities. Christian students at the University of Maiduguri have protested that it is becoming "an extension of Iran," [ ] and claim that Tehran has funded campaigns against alcohol and immodesty in women's dress. [ ] Iran is also responsible for the burgeoning of Muslim prayer sites and the appearance of posters of Khomeini on campus and in the surrounding community. [ ]

Muslim radicals at Nigerian universities [ ] are seeking to establish ties to fundamentalist groups outside the universities who wish to purge what they believe is a heretical traditional religious hierarchy in northern Nigeria and a governmental structure corrupted by non-Islamic practices. Press reporting indicates that religious riots in northern Nigeria by radical Muslim university students and members of a militant Islamic group have taken several thousand lives over the past two years and stretched the Nigerian police and military to their limits before order was restored. The Iranian media, seeking to profit from these disturbances, have portrayed those who died in the riots as martyrs. The non-Muslim sector of the Nigerian press

reports that Iran is using its diplomatic presence to recruit militant Muslim groups in an attempt to establish an Iranian-style Islamic state in Nigeria. The Nigerian People's Party, whose strength was among Christians in southern Nigeria until it was banned by the present military government, publicly complained in 1982 that radical Muslims were distributing leaflets and photographs of Khomeini in the north. [ ]

#### Conservative Muslim Targets

[ ] Iran is also interested in penetrating the established, conservative Muslim communities of several African countries. Iranian officials hope, [ ] that they can undermine the influence that such "reactionary" regimes as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the Sudan have among the conservative majority of African Muslims. [ ] the Iranians view *Nigeria* as particularly important to their plans to bring Islamic renewal to Africa because of its large and politically active Muslim population and its influence among its neighbors. Tehran's interest in the Nigerian university and clinical networks underscore the country's importance. We believe that Tehran also wishes to cultivate the small number of Muslims in *Zaire* because of Kinshasa's economic potential and close ties to Western countries. [ ]

*Senegal* is also likely one of Tehran's principal conservative Muslim targets. In our judgment, the Iranians particularly value Senegal's Muslim community because it is a highly organized political entity that exercises, through Senegalese President Diouf, considerable influence on world Islam and among neighboring francophone African states. According to diplomatic reporting, nearly all Senegalese Muslims belong to the Muride and Tijani brotherhoods, which dominate the country's economy and have assumed the authority of traditional political leadership in the society. In the past, the brotherhoods have forcefully blocked radical Muslim fundamentalism in Senegal and have supported the government's close ties to Saudi Arabia. Moreover, early this year the Senegalese Government shut down the Iranian Embassy in Dakar because of its alleged subversive activities. [ ]

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Now, however, with the Senegalese economy seriously affected by drought and because of slowed rates of assistance provided by Riyadh, the Iranians have developed a small, but active, group of sympathizers in the Senegalese Islamic community among members of the Niassene branch of the Tijani brotherhood and among students and teachers at Dakar University.

[redacted] the Caliph-General of the Niassene recently visited Tehran and accepted Iranian funds for the construction of a grand mosque. A cross section of the membership of the Senegalese Muslim brotherhoods was invited to the fifth anniversary celebration of the Iranian revolution in Tehran, according to the Senegalese press, and a group of clerics from mosques throughout the country attended. The group was received by Khomeini himself, visited the holy city of Qom and the battlefield with Iraq, and met Iraqi prisoners who had joined the Iranian cause. [redacted]

Tehran appears to be generous in supporting its friends in Senegal. Although the Saudis have given a good deal more to Africa's Muslim communities, the groups Iran has targeted would be unlikely to have other—above all Saudi—sources of funding. [redacted]

[redacted] the Iranians have made donations of \$20,000 or more to various mosques and to young Islamic leaders—such as the Shiite Muslim Cheik al-Mun'in al-Zayn, an ardent admirer of Khomeini. [redacted]



Figure 2. "In the name of God the merciful, the compassionate ...": logo of an Iranian-inspired Senegalese fundamentalist group.

being offered both in Nairobi and Tehran for senior Muslim officials, [redacted]

The Iranian revolution has also brought about a Muslim resurgence among Asians in South Africa, according to Muslim leaders interviewed in the press. A few groups closely identify themselves with revolutionary Iran, and a mass rally called by one group in Cape Town recently attracted several thousand participants. [redacted]

Despite these efforts, we believe Iranian success to date has been limited by indifference on the part of the majority of African Muslims and by the Iranians' aggressive methods. Iranian representatives and sympathizers are outspoken in their criticisms of the Sufi

Tehran, [redacted] is distributing pro-Iranian publications, issuing invitations to clerics to travel to Iran, funding Islamic schools, and sending Iranian teachers to Kenya. Seminars are

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brotherhoods,<sup>3</sup> which are popular in black Africa, and are quick to chastise members for leniency in ritual observances. The Iranian charge in Madagascar outraged women working in the office of the President and the Foreign Ministry by refusing to shake their hands and by lecturing them on their attire, according to US Embassy reporting. Disturbances between Iranian sympathizers over forms of prayer and consumption of alcohol have caused fistfights at mosques in Nigeria and elsewhere, according to press reports.

### Diplomatic Relations and Political Activities

In our judgment, the spread of Khomeini's gospel at the personal level is marching in step with the rebuilding of official relationships with Africa—part of a worldwide effort—which were broken off or suspended after the Iranian revolution in 1979. To accomplish this purpose, Tehran has relied initially on high-level delegations that visit targeted African states and on follow-up activity by Iranian embassy personnel who also attempt to create a network of agents and sympathizers willing to spread the propaganda message of Iran's revolutionary experience.

### Sending Delegations

Official Iranian delegations have fanned out across the Third World including Africa during the past two and a half years, visiting for the most part countries with large Muslim populations. In black Africa these have included Senegal, Nigeria, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, and Ivory Coast, according to press reports.

Iran has also not neglected certain countries with small or negligible Muslim populations as well, such as Zaire (10 percent) and Zimbabwe, Angola, and Gabon (each with less than 2 percent), that Tehran perceives to be strategically important because of regional influence or economic potential.

Press reporting shows that many of these delegations have been led by high-level Iranian officials, often

<sup>3</sup> The Sufi brotherhoods are religious orders whose members are bound by personal loyalty to a single teacher and follow a mystical strain of Islam that seeks direct communion with God.

including clerics and members of the Revolutionary Guard. During July 1982, for example, eight delegations, each led by a cleric or political leader, were dispatched from Tehran to 24 African countries to denounce Israel's involvement in Lebanon and to suggest ways in which the Nonaligned Movement (NAM) could put together a liberation force to support Palestinian political objectives. Over the past year, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Hosein Sheikholeslam has visited heads of state and foreign ministers in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Angola, Nigeria, Gabon, Kenya, and Madagascar. During the same period, Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati made trips to Zimbabwe, Gabon, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Sierra Leone.

These missions usually have noncontroversial public mandates related to the establishment of diplomatic missions or the negotiation of concessionary oil contracts, according to press reports. Once on the scene, Iranian delegations usually seek a general exchange of views on a wide range of foreign policy issues. Press reporting indicates that, during a recent visit to Nigeria, Iranian Foreign Ministry officials spoke in support of the Libyan-backed dissident Transitional Government of National Unity (GUNT) in Chad, the independence of Western Sahara, a crude oil price rise within OPEC, direct confrontation with the Government of South Africa, and unconditional independence for Namibia.

At the same time, Tehran has also worked actively among the Africans to obtain support for its positions in the NAM and the United Nations. According to press reports, Iran successfully lobbied African governments to move last year's NAM summit away from Baghdad. Iran has been a leader of the effort to persuade African and other Third World delegates to expel Israel from the United Nations, most recently leading this year's challenge to Israel's credentials. Iranian delegations that have been sent to Zambia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Niger, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Angola, and Zimbabwe to lobby for this measure have had only limited success.

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Tehran has not limited itself to bilateral contacts. According to US diplomatic reporting, Iran also has been active in the Organization of the Islamic Conference, presenting its side of the Iran-Iraq war and calling for a pan-Islamic oil embargo and other penalties against the United States for its support of Israeli policies in the Middle East. The Conference formed a Peace Committee in 1982 to resolve the conflict between Iran and Iraq, first under the leadership of the late President Sekou Toure of Guinea, now under President Sir Dawda Jawara of The Gambia. We believe the Africans are eager to see an end to the war, in part because they know that it drastically reduces the funds available to Tehran and Baghdad for foreign assistance. According to press and US Embassy reporting, Tehran has snubbed the Committee's offers of mediation, however, and continues to demand the removal of the present Iraqi regime as a prerequisite to negotiations. [redacted]

#### Opening Embassies

As a result of official contacts begun soon after Iran's revolution in 1979—and expanded with the improvement in its economy and the consolidation of clerical control two years ago—there are now 18 Iranian embassies in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Iran has diplomatic ties with Congo through its mission in Kinshasa, Zaire, with Cameroon through its Embassy in Gabon, and with Djibouti through its mission in Somalia. It also has an Interests Section at the Swiss Embassy in Pretoria. [redacted]

Most of these embassies are headed by charges assisted by a cultural or a commercial attache. Iranian embassy personnel usually keep a low profile at local official and diplomatic functions, according to reporting from US Embassies in Africa. Most are young, inexperienced, and lack language capabilities; they include academics, clerics, Army personnel, and former Revolutionary Guards. The new Iranian Ambassador to Sierra Leone, only 25 years old, was until recently in charge of instruction in politics and ideology for the Iranian armed forces and a lecturer in

<sup>4</sup> The group comprises Angola, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Tanzania, Zaire, and Zimbabwe. The Mauritanian Government has ignored the Embassy office Iran opened two years ago in Nouakchott, but there is a Mauritanian mission in Tehran. [redacted]

theology at the University in Qom, according to US Embassy sources. [redacted]

A few senior-level Iranian diplomats have assumed regional responsibilities, according to diplomatic reporting. The Ambassador in Zimbabwe has visited a number of southern African countries, and, similarly, Tehran's charge in Dakar has traveled extensively in West Africa. [redacted]

So far, few Sub-Saharan African states have established embassies in Tehran. We believe, based on diplomatic reporting, that, as of last year, only Gabon, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Nigeria, Zaire, and Somalia were represented. Cameroon is represented by its Ambassador in Riyadh. Ghana, pleading economic necessity, has indicated this year that it would close its mission. [redacted] Press reports indicate that South Africa maintains an unofficial consulate in Tehran. [redacted]

#### Official Propaganda

[redacted] Iran, working through its diplomatic missions in Africa, has established a network of local press contacts which it uses for the dissemination of propaganda. This network places articles favorable to the Khomeini regime in the media and makes publications and cassettes available in local languages, according to US Embassy reporting. An as yet unsubstantiated report indicates that newspapers, magazines, and other printed materials in English, Swahili, and Arabic were sent this year from Tehran and Qom to some 50 locations in Uganda. [redacted]

According to French press reports, the Iranian Ministry of Islamic Guidance has allocated \$65 million in fiscal 1984/85 for the dissemination of such propaganda abroad. As part of this effort, Iran provides funds for the publication of books and periodicals by African Muslims who use Iranian propaganda themes and exploit Africa's Islamic revival. Prior to its closure by Senegalese authorities earlier this year, the

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Iranian Embassy in Senegal supported two journals—one of them, *The Dawn*—published by Muslim radical Sidy Lamine Niasse, [redacted]

[redacted] Niasse has published tracts calling for an Islamic revolution in Senegal and a holy war against the West [redacted]

To reinforce its propaganda message, Tehran has brought to Iran several hundred African Muslims with a broad range of occupational and social and political backgrounds to attend educational conferences at Iranian Government expense, according to

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SENEGAL:

## TOUT SUR L'UNI- VERSITÉ

HAUSSE DES PRIX AU SENEGAL

UN DOCUMENT  
TOP - SECRET  
SUR LE F. M. I.



Les Juifs  
satisfaits  
de Hassan II

IRAN - IRAK : NOTRE ENVOYÉ SPÉCIAL REVIENT DU FRONT

Figure 3. "The Dawn," a phrase used frequently in anti-Iraqi war propaganda, is highlighted on the cover of this Iranian-backed Senegalese publication.

press reports. In December 1982, for example, a group of Senegalese Muslims, leaders of the Shiite community, and prominent judges from Tanzania visited Tehran for an "Islamic Unity" seminar. In 1983 the Iranian press reported that the imam of Freetown's Jula Military Barracks led a delegation of clerics from Sierra Leone to the International Institute of Islamic Learning and Jurisprudence in Tehran at the time of anniversary celebrations of the Iranian revolution. They were joined by the principal officers of the Freetown Lebanese Union and journalists from Sierra Leone who had attended a World Islamic Conference in Tehran. One Iranian-sponsored Senegalese journal hailed such gatherings as a first step toward uniting African Muslim leaders in a single political and religious group and as "a blow against imperialism, neocolonialism, and all the forces of social repression."

Iranian propaganda in Africa stresses the unity of Islam, playing down such formidable barriers between Iranian and African Muslims as the sectarian differences between Shias and Sunnis and racial divisions between Persians and black Africans, according to US Embassy and press reports. Although most African Muslims are Sunnis and only the Lebanese and Asian expatriates are—like the Iranians—Shias, Tehran portrays a territorial unity within the Muslim world, stretching from Dakar to Jakarta. It identifies Israel, the United States, and the Soviet Union and their allies as the common enemy. Iran solicits support for its conflict with Iraq and attempts to counter conservative Arab influence in Africa, particularly that of Saudi Arabia, while supporting Tripoli and the Libyan invasion of Chad. It seeks to foster anti-Jewish sentiment and sharply condemns Liberia and Zaire for resuming diplomatic relations with Israel.

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Where possible, Iranian propaganda tries to deepen rifts between Muslim and Christian populations and between Muslim groups and non-Islamic governments. In Nigeria, for example, the US Embassy reports that propaganda pieces of Iranian origin play on political and religious differences between Muslims of the north and Yoruba in the south. An Iranian publication in London recently published an article on "The Agony of Muslims in Kenya," alleging that Nairobi was persecuting its Muslim minority, according to US Embassy reporting.

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### Covert Actions

Tehran's foreign policy openly calls for the establishment of Islamic governments in black Africa. The record shows that the Iranians are seeking to do this by attacking ruling elites in the media, proselytizing—with or without official permission—and offering military and religious training to dissidents. Indeed, Iran is attempting to subvert several black African governments with which it maintains outwardly good relations—including Tanzania, Senegal, and Nigeria. So far, such efforts have had little success because they appeal mainly to the radical fringes of traditional Muslim communities.

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Iranian activities among African Muslims have already caused alarm among a number of African leaders. Unauthorized preaching by visiting Iranian clerics among fundamentalist groups and Iranian Shias living on Zanzibar, for example, has worried Tanzanian officials, according to US Embassy reporting. The government in Dar es Salaam is particularly sensitive to the potential for unrest among separatist groups in Zanzibar and is keeping a close watch on Iranian activities. [redacted]

Early this year, Senegal uncovered and publicized a wide range of clandestine activity among Muslim fundamentalists by the Iranian Embassy in Dakar, including the distribution of tracts critical of President Diouf to the Lebanese community. Students returning from Iran were urging the establishment of an Islamic Republic, and, according to press reports, the Iranian charge was supporting the activities of dissident Muslim leaders despite warnings from Senegalese authorities. [redacted]

According to US Embassy reporting, the Iranian Embassy in Lagos over a year ago targeted the large and relatively poor Muslim population in northern Nigeria that has been hard hit by economic stagnation and unemployment. [redacted]

[redacted] Iranians have been financing publications of Nigerian Muslim organizations and even funding public demonstrations of support for the Khomeini regime. [redacted]

There is as yet no evidence that Iran has developed a terrorist capability in Africa or has made inroads into the conservative majority of Africa's Muslim populations. Nonetheless, [redacted] government spokesmen and resident diplomats from conservative Arab and Western states are concerned that Iranian-trained terrorists plan to sabotage embassies and government installations. These concerns are not unfounded. [redacted]

[redacted] Early this year, according to US Embassy reporting, an Iranian identified as a member of the group that seized the US Embassy in Tehran in 1979 was seen in the neighborhood of the Ambassador's

residence in Dakar, causing the government to take security measures to protect American and French installations in the city. [redacted]

The Iranians have been in contact with some secular as well as Muslim dissident groups, according to US Embassy and press sources, favoring those they believe will be able to exploit popular grievances against corruption and economic inequality similar to those that led to the downfall of the Shah. They maintain that the present international political system is fundamentally unjust and that the globe is divided into "oppressed nations" and the "oppressors." [redacted]

Tehran's principal non-Islamic target has been the South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO). [redacted]

[redacted] Tehran has offered SWAPO both material and psychological support. Although [redacted] no evidence of material support to SWAPO so far, the US Embassy in Dar Es Salaam believes that Iran is likely to pursue this option as a relatively low-cost means of enhancing its image. [redacted]

#### **Economic Blandishments**

While focusing on religion and morality, Tehran has not neglected the practical impact of closer economic ties with African nations. Economic interests have helped to shape Tehran's relations with Africa during the past two years just as they did during the time of the Shah. Delegations of high-level Iranian trade

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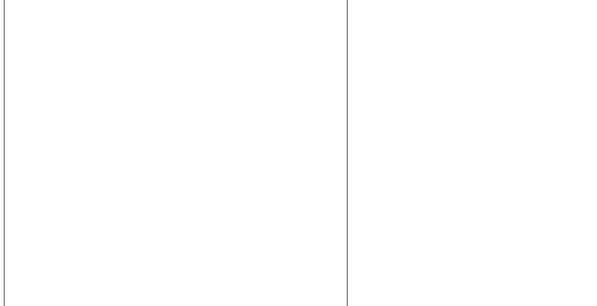
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officials have demonstrated Tehran's interest in developing economic ties with a number of African countries and have been quick to offer preferential terms to African clients who will support Iran's political objectives in the region. [REDACTED]

#### Oil Politics

Several black African governments have responded eagerly to Tehran's economic initiatives, particularly to offers of favorable oil contracts, and in some cases have shown themselves willing to upgrade political relations with Iran:

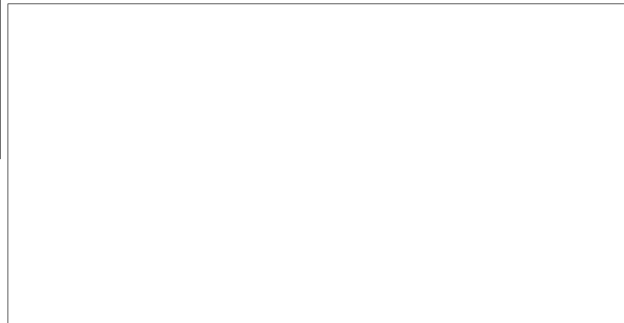
- Press and US Embassy sources reported in early 1983 that Iran had agreed to supply Tanzania with 300,000 metric tons of crude during the year. This agreement was extended in October 1984 to delivery of 400,000 tons of crude in 1985, provided the Tanzanians could make a downpayment of \$4.5 million in November this year.



- US Embassy reporting indicates that the opening of an Iranian Embassy in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in May 1983 was linked to an agreement in December 1982 that Tehran would supply 360,000 tons of crude. In May 1983, Freetown's Foreign Minister Conteh signed a memorandum of understanding covering economic, political, and cultural cooperation and asked for help in exploiting Sierra Leone's oil and gas reserves and creating a national oil company, according to British press reports. One of President Stevens's principal advisers, Afro-Lebanese businessman Jamil Said Mohamed of Sierra Leone, has acted as middleman in dealing with the Iranians.
- In October 1984, an Iranian delegation, led by a special envoy of Iranian President Khamenei, signed an oil agreement with Ghana and reached an accord with Ghanaian officials on international and bilateral policy positions, according to press reports.

- Some months ago Iran contacted The Gambia's Minister of Economic Planning with an offer of concessional oil, according to US Embassy sources. Although President Jawara is reluctant to develop bilateral ties to the Iranians because of his position on the Islamic Conference Peace Committee, according to US Embassy sources, he will probably find it difficult to turn down Iran's terms. As in Sierra Leone, the negotiations have been undertaken by Jamil Said Mohamed, who will receive fishing rights off the Gambian shore if the deal is put through, according to US Embassy sources. The Iranians insist they will negotiate the final agreement only with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and we expect they will attach political strings to the deal.

- Zimbabwe has shown some interest in buying Iranian crude, according to press reports. Lacking foreign exchange, Harare may attempt to barter local products for oil. An Iranian delegation visiting in May emphasized the need to coordinate policy planning on African and Near Eastern issues, according to Iranian press reporting.



- In the past year, at least five Iranian missions have visited Ivory Coast, [REDACTED] and concessional oil sales have played a key role in discussions with Ivorian officials. Although Abidjan is virtually self-sufficient in oil, it refines imported crude for reexport to other West African countries to increase its hard currency earnings.

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- Iran attempted to come to an oil agreement with Madagascar but has been unwilling to accept Madagascar's terms for repayment and scheduling, according to US Embassy sources. According to Antananarivo radio, however, Madagascar has negotiated an export agreement with the Iranians covering a number of agricultural products.

- Lebanese businessman Jamil Said Mohamed of Sierra Leone offered to broker an oil agreement between Tehran and Liberia in August 1983, according to the US Embassy in Monrovia. We do not know whether a deal was completed.

#### A Market for African Commodities.

While oil supply is Iran's most substantial bargaining chip, Tehran is also trying to exploit its potential as a market for African goods.

Iran is discussing trade terms with a number of African governments that have not had commercial ties to Tehran since the 1978-79 revolution. Although some countries are seeking contracts for the sale of agricultural products, Iran has shown greatest interest during the past year in buying African minerals.

it has sought to purchase coal from a number of unnamed Sub-Saharan African countries.

South Africa is probably still Iran's most important trade partner in Africa, although economic exchanges between the two countries are undeclared for political reasons. Before the Iranian revolution, Tehran supplied almost 90 percent of Pretoria's crude and refined oil needs. After the downfall of the Shah, Iran promptly announced the end of commercial and diplomatic ties to South Africa and ended oil sales. Nevertheless, according to US Embassy and press sources, Iran imports significant quantities of South African goods, particularly industrial plastics, construction steel, vehicles, plate glass, and food grains.

South Africa also supplies arms to Iran, according to press [redacted] and has probably bought Iranian crude oil surreptitiously through the spot market. The two countries trade with each other through middlemen in Swaziland in order to circumvent the Iranians' ban on trade with Pretoria, [redacted]

#### Offers of Assistance

In addition to expanding trade relationships, press and diplomatic reporting indicates Foreign Ministry officials and Iranian embassy personnel have promised generous economic and development aid and oil at concessional prices to African governments.

a number of governments have been offered technical advice on oil exploration and refining and on industrial and agricultural development. Offers of assistance in road construction and communications have been made to Niger. A similar offer has been made to Zimbabwe for reconstructing its long-inoperable oil refinery. Recently, the new Iranian Ambassador in Dar es Salaam publicly announced Iran's readiness to assist in the construction and development of Tanzania's new national capital and to direct assistance to agriculture and small industry in Tanzania's small but influential Asian Shiite community.

Iran lacks the resources at present to follow through with substantial levels of assistance to purchase African support. Declining oil revenues have strained an economy already plagued by war costs, mismanagement, and ideological rigidity. Thus, for the most part, Tehran has concentrated on limited, carefully targeted assistance to African Muslim communities, providing some scholarships and travel money and helping to build mosques, Islamic schools, and clinics. In addition, Iran has made well-publicized gifts of food to Ghana, Mali, and most recently Ethiopia, where it has given over 90 tons of food and medicines.<sup>5</sup>

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**African Resistance to Iranian Machinations**

Although offers of assistance and closer economic and diplomatic ties have been welcomed by some African governments and by some radical fundamentalist groups, we believe this enthusiasm is not widely shared. Our reading of press and US Embassy reporting suggests that most African leaders perceive Iran as a potential threat to the stability of their countries, which rests heavily on balancing the interests of highly diverse tribal, religious, and regional groups. Because of widespread apprehension that Iranian revolutionary rhetoric could upset this balance, several states have taken steps to blunt Tehran's campaign.

The conservative Islamic community in Nigeria and Nigerian officials have expressed concern over Iran's contact with Muslim students in northern Nigeria, [redacted] Lagos recalled its Ambassador from Tehran for consultation after riots in that region in 1982 because Nigerian officials believed that the Iranians had a hand in the disturbances; in our judgment, however, the disturbances were related primarily to local issues. The following year the Nigerians arrested and expelled a delegation of Iranian clerics preaching in the north, [redacted]

According to some Embassy reports, the government is closely watching travel and contacts made by the Iranian Ambassador. We believe Lagos feels hampered, however, in its ability to take countermeasures out of reluctance to stir up controversy with Muslim sects in the north. [redacted]

Senegal has reacted more forcefully. Outraged over reports that the Iranians were engaging in extensive clandestine activity [redacted]

[redacted] the Senegalese Government expelled the Iranian diplomats and closed the Embassy. [redacted]

The closing of the Iranian Embassy in Dakar caused anxiety among neighboring African capitals, according to US Embassy reporting. [redacted]

[redacted] Iranian Embassies in Francophone countries were put under close surveillance by local police and security forces. US diplomatic reporting indicates that President Bongo of Gabon and other African leaders have warned Lebanese communities to avoid contact with the Iranian Embassy. [redacted]

Other African governments have reacted sharply to Iranian activities in their countries:

- In February 1982, [redacted] Ivory Coast's Foreign Ministry forced the departure of an Iranian delegation to Abidjan that had been observed at mosques distributing pamphlets that denounced the United States. [redacted]
- Mali rebuked Iranian diplomats, according to US Embassy reports, after learning earlier this year that the Iranians had been distributing pamphlets attacking Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. [redacted]
- Iranian officials in Kenya were cautioned by police concerning anti-Iraqi and anti-Christian literature being distributed in the Muslim community, according to sources of the US Embassy. [redacted]

Other African governments have reacted more cautiously, not wanting to challenge the Iranians directly: [redacted]

- For two years Mauritania has resisted Tehran's pressure to recognize the presence of the Iranian Embassy in Nouakchott or to accredit its diplomats, fearing a sharp reaction by the Sunni Muslim community and Iraqi sympathizers in the government, [redacted]
- Sierra Leone has tried to rein in local Iranian representatives and to dissociate itself from Iranian statements attacking Saudi Arabia, Israel, Iraq, and the United States, according to US Embassy reporting. [redacted]

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**Secret****The Arabs' Role**

Iran's attempts to expand its activities in Sub-Saharan Africa put it face to face with Saudi Arabia's longstanding influence. The Saudis have been closely associated in Africa with Islamic groups that are politically conservative but fundamentalist in that they seek strict adherence to Islamic law and custom. Thus far, however, the Saudis have paramount external influence on African Muslims. For example, the yearly pilgrimage to Mecca brings thousands of West Africans into contact with Saudi conservatism, and Riyadh's influence is further enhanced by several million dollars of financial support per year to governments and Islamic groups, far exceeding that of any other Arab state and Iran. [redacted]

In our view, Saudi Arabia's extensive effort to support and increase its influence in Africa over the past 10 years had been designed in part to counter Libyan activity there. The Libyans, like the Iranians, have been supporting radical fundamentalist groups whose primary political objective is to replace existing secular political institutions with Islamic ones. Libyan leader Qadhafi's radical appeal has attracted many among the younger generation who seek dynamic but simple answers to Africa's economic, social, and political problems. [redacted]

Now, however, the Saudis identify the Iranians as the greatest threat to their African interests, according to US Embassy reporting. Iran's clerical leaders have made no secret of their desire to supersede Saudi influence in Africa, nor of their view that Saudi leaders are corrupt lackeys of the West. The recent hajj conference that Tehran sponsored in Sierra Leone, for example, provided a platform for inflammatory anti-Saudi propaganda that reverberated all the way to Riyadh. Since then, according to US Embassy sources, the Saudis have announced they will open a diplomatic mission in Sierra Leone and have brought pressure to bear on Freetown to distance itself from Iran. [redacted]

Because of its conflict with Iran in the Middle East, Iraq is also opposed to Iran's activity in Africa. Baghdad maintains a longstanding relationship with a number of African states—most notably Tanzania, Senegal, and Mali—and supplies modest amounts of

assistance. US diplomatic reporting indicates that Iraq's embassies have closely monitored Iranian activities and have been quick to inform host governments when the Iranians step out of line. The Iraqis played a decisive role in souring Tehran's relationship with Mali by relaying evidence of Iranian activity against traditional Muslim leaders and the government, according to US Embassy reporting. [redacted]

[redacted] the Iraqis have tried to put a stop to Niger's proposed sale of uranium to Iran, and they have broadcast to other West African governments the reasons behind the Senegalese Government's closure of Iran's Embassy in Dakar. Occasionally, members of Iranian and Iraqi Embassies have tangled directly, and recently, according to diplomatic sources, members of both countries' diplomatic missions in Madagascar fought a pitched battle in one of the local mosques until police restored order. [redacted]

While Iraq has tried to counter Tehran directly in Africa, the general intent of Libyan efforts in the region lie parallel to Iranian interests. Both countries are eager to undermine Saudi and Western influences in black Africa, according to their own testimony. In public statements high officials of both governments have underlined their common purposes: to create a unified Islamic revolutionary movement, to rid the Third World of "exploiters," and to undertake bilateral cooperation in the political, economic, and cultural sectors. They both have attempted to disrupt the annual pilgrimage to Mecca in the past two years in order to embarrass the Saudis. Moreover, there is some diplomatic reporting on direct Libyan-Iranian achievements in Africa. They have cooperated in seeking influence among Muslim communities living on Nigeria's borders with Chad and Cameroon. There also is at least some spotty evidence that the Libyans have encouraged Iranian-African oil deals during the past year. [redacted]

African leaders have generally tried to underplay their relations with Iran in order to avoid antagonizing the Saudis and other Arab states, according to press and US Embassy reporting. Most Sub-Saharan African governments have maintained a neutral position on the Iran-Iraq war. [redacted]

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**Prospects and Implications for Political Instability**

Tehran faces a continuing uphill battle in its efforts to broaden the base of its support in Africa. Barriers include:

- Hostility of traditional African Muslim leaders and conservative African governments.
- The Iranians' difficulties, as Shias, to insinuate themselves into the Sunni African Muslim mainstream.
- The active opposition of the Saudis, Iraqis, and Western governments, which are important sources of aid for many African states.
- The Iranians' limited ability to offer aid in sufficient quantities to win over African leaders.
- The Iranians' penchant for attaching political strings to promises of aid.
- Iran's reputation for supporting and conducting terrorist activities. [redacted]

The main factors working in favor of Iran's campaign to establish its presence in Africa are its image as a successful revolutionary regime, Africa's need for sources of moderately priced oil, and the potential for instability among Muslim communities, particularly in West Africa where social, economic, and ethnic divisions are being fueled by the Islamic revival. If the fundamentalist revival—within which Iran finds its most receptive audiences—continues to grow in Africa as we believe it will (see box on page 2), the potential for Iranian activity in the region will increase. [redacted]

In the short term, we expect Iranian gains to be limited because of the combined weight of the forces working against them. Over the longer term, if economic and social conditions continue to deteriorate, Tehran's influence among Muslims in Africa, and hence its claim to Islamic leadership, will grow. [redacted]

We believe the most worrisome development in the long run would be if Khomeini's radical and politicized view of Islam captured the imagination of Africa's Sunni urban masses, say, in Lagos, Dakar, or Zanzibar. Although Tehran now speaks mainly to selected elements of African society, Africa is experiencing an awakening in Islamic fundamentalist awareness that risks reopening longstanding ethnic and religious jealousies, provoking widespread violence, and eventually jeopardizing the ability of some governments to remain in power. [redacted]

Over the longer term, it is likely that more Iranian-supported groups of political activists and some terrorist cells will emerge. As Iranian officials develop expertise and acquire international contacts, they will be able to use their assets more effectively to advance Iranian interests by initiating clandestine activities under diplomatic guise and by training host-country nationals in Iran. If Tehran continues to articulate defiance of Westernization and of the great powers to radical Muslim audiences, we believe it will be able increasingly to attract, train, and support like-minded individuals and groups dissatisfied with the status quo. [redacted]

A significant increase in radical Islamic activity in black Africa would heighten the chances for political instability, particularly in Senegal, Nigeria, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, and Ivory Coast, and offer expanded opportunities to Iran. This prospect would also increase the likelihood of a growing anti-Western bias if as militant followers of Khomeini's revolutionary ideology now in the universities eventually fill positions of influence in African governments traditionally friendly to the West. [redacted]

**Implications for US Interests**

We believe that a significant increase in Iranian influence in Sub-Saharan Africa and of related political activity by radical Islamic groups would damage US relations with a number of these African states. [redacted]

Tehran's activities in the region already present a multifaceted challenge to US interests:

- The Iranian propaganda line is directed explicitly against the West.
- Iran is providing training and support for a number of dissident groups who could target US embassies and personnel for hostile acts.
- Using oil as a bargaining tool, Tehran has tried to secure the backing of African governments on a variety of international issues. [redacted]

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***The Effect of Iranian Activities in Africa on the Soviets***

*The Soviets will receive little direct benefit from Iranian influence in Africa at least over the short term. Iranian suspicion of the USSR, clerical hostility to Communist ideology, and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan will continue to distance Tehran from Moscow. The Soviets are also hampered by the dissatisfaction of African Muslim leaders, such as Senegal's President Diouf, and the Nigerian military, and their civilian predecessors, with the paucity and poor quality of Moscow's assistance.* [redacted]

*To the extent that Iranian activities in Sub-Saharan Africa undermine US influence, the USSR will indirectly benefit, particularly since most African states with significant Muslim communities are predominantly moderate or even pro-West. The Iranians also would create opportunities for the Soviets if Moscow targets militant revolutionary groups, such as the Muslim student associations or Senegalese Niassene radicals, for significant support.* [redacted]

- Increased activism by African Muslim radicals in local governments or international Muslim organizations on behalf of causes that conflict with US positions.
- Rising levels of violence associated with disputes between conservative and radical Muslims or differences between Christians and Muslims.
- The gradual dominance of Islamic political institutions in black Africa, particularly in countries such as Senegal and Nigeria.
- Increasing numbers of countries forced to turn to Iran for oil or as a market for their goods—for example, Nigerien uranium—making them vulnerable to coercion.
- Indications of mainline Sunni Islamic groups, in need of funds, are opening themselves up to use by Iran as a means of propaganda or political manipulation.

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We believe the image of the United States as an enemy of Islam will remain an important symbol for Khomeini's followers in Africa. The Iranians criticize the United States for its close links with Israel, and try to exploit this issue as well as Washington's support of moderate African regimes.

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**Danger Signals for the Future**

We can foresee a number of developments related to the present wave of Islamic fundamentalism that would open opportunities for increasing Iranian influence in Sub-Saharan Africa and could signal greater regional instability or problems for the United States, such as:

- Indications that individual governments are unable to detect and control Iranian activity.
- Evidence that Iranian terrorist networks are being extended to Africa.

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## Appendix

## Country Survey of Iranian Activity in Africa

	Percent Muslims	Diplomatic Relations	Trade	Economic Assistance	State Visits, Delegations
Angola	1-2	Iranian Embassy opened March 1983.	None.	None.	1983: Delegation led by Iranian Foreign Ministry official Sheikho- leslam discussed diplomatic relations.
Benin	12	None.	None.	None.	1984: Visit of Benin's Planning Minister to Tehran . . . discussed economic matters . . . issued joint communique supporting expulsion of Israel from UN.
Burkina	20	Established relations 1 November 1984.	None.	None.	1984: Iranian Foreign Ministry of- ficial met with President Sankara in January.
Burundi	1-2	None.	1983: Imports \$24 mil- lion of Iranian goods, mainly oil through Western multinational oil companies.	None.	
Cameroon	16	Cameroon represent- ed through its Em- bassy in Saudi Ara- bia, Iran through its Embassy in Gabon.	None.	None.	
Central African Republic	15	None.	None.	None.	
Chad	45	None.	None.	None.	
Congo	1-2	Tehran represented through its mission in Kinshasa.	None.	None.	
Djibouti	92	Iran represented through its Embassy in Somalia.	None.	None.	
Ethiopia	40	Iranian Embassy in Addis headed by a charge with two staff members.	Some spare parts for planes.	None.	1984: Visits by Iranian clerics and Foreign Ministry officials.
Gabon	1-2	Iranian Embassy opened in 1983, headed by an Am- bassador with three staff members.	Iran buys some wood, dried fruit, and nuts.	None.	1983: Visit by Sheikholeslam and Foreign Minister Velayati; 1984: Foreign Ministry delegation.

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## Country Survey of Iranian Activity in Africa (continued)

	Percent Muslims	Diplomatic Relations	Trade	Economic Assistance	State Visits, Delegations
The Gambia	90	None. Banjul has proposed that Gambian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia be accredited to Tehran. (1984: President Jawara chosen to head Islamic Conference Peace Mission to settle Iran-Iraq conflict.)	Iran has offered oil on concessional terms.	Some for building mosques.	1984: Delegation of clerics from Iran.
Ghana	12	Iranian Embassy opened in 1983; Ghanaian Embassy in Tehran closed in 1984 because of financial problems.	1984: Oil contract—terms unknown—probably Iranian crude for swap arrangement with Ghana's normal suppliers because Iranian crude not suitable for Ghana's refinery.	1983: Limited amount of emergency aid—blankets, medicines, food for Ghanaians expelled from Nigeria.	1983: Visit by Iranian delegation bringing gifts of food. 1984: Delegation bringing Iranian head-of-state's request to Rawlings to support Iranian anti-Israeli proposal before UN.
Guinea	65	Iranian Embassy opened in 1983 with charge and one attache.	None.	None.	1984: Visits by Iranian Foreign Ministry officials.
Ivory Coast	25	Iran has Embassy with a charge, a political counselor, and two staff members.	1984: Discussions of oil deal and possibilities of trade in other products.	Modest amounts—no details provided.	1984: Iranian Foreign Ministry visits to Abidjan.
Kenya	7	Iranian Embassy with charge and one staff member.	1983: Kenya imported \$24 million—mostly oil. Kenya exported \$4 million.	Modest amounts to Muslim community.	
Lesotho	1-2	None.	None.	None.	1984: Iranian Foreign Ministry officials visited Maseru to discuss resuming diplomatic relations.
Liberia	15	Theoretically maintain relations but no exchange of missions.	None.	None.	
Madagascar	7	Iranian Embassy opened in 1982. Ambassador appointed September 1984.	Negotiations of oil sale fell through in 1984—issue still pending. Discussions of export of Madagascar's agricultural products continue.	None.	1984: Iranian commercial delegation discussing increased economic exchanges.
Mali	90	Iranian Embassy opened in 1983 under a charge.	None.	1983: Some 4,000 lbs. of food aid—flour and grain.	1983: Visits by Sheikholeslam and Iranian Foreign Ministry officials offering food aid and presenting case on Iran-Iraq war to President Traore.

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**Country Survey of Iranian Activity in Africa (continued)**

	Percent Muslims	Diplomatic Relations	Trade	Economic Assistance	State Visits, Delegations
Mauritania	100	Iranian Embassy office opened in 1982 but ignored by host government. Two diplomats and three staff members there. Mauritanian Embassy in Tehran since 1977.	None.	Iran has offered oil and economic aid, but none has been accepted by Mauritanian Government.	1983: Iranian Foreign Ministry delegation.
Mauritius	17	Diplomatic relations but no Embassies.	None.	None.	1984: Iranian delegations seeking, unsuccessfully, to open Embassy, although Mauritius is interested in developing commercial relations.
Mozambique	11	1984: Iranian Embassy opened under a charge.	There have been some discussions of an oil sale. 1983: Iranian exports totaled \$3 million, imports \$2 million.	None.	1984: Iranian Foreign Ministry delegation.
Niger	85	1984: Iranian Embassy opened under a charge with staff of five.	No agreement as yet on uranium sale or barter for petroleum product.	1984: Iranian offer of technical assistance in oil, mining, road construction, and communications.	1984: Delegations from Iranian Foreign Ministry and petroleum and mining industries.
Nigeria	50	Iranian Embassy with an Ambassador and staff of five. A Nigerian Embassy in Tehran with an Ambassador.	1983: Exports to Nigeria of \$1 million.	Generous Iranian donations to Muslim community projects, including over \$100,000 to one student group.	1984: Iranian Foreign Ministry officials discussed political issues: South Africa, Namibia, Chad, OPEC.
Senegal	82	Iranian Embassy closed by Senegal in February 1984. Iranian affairs handled by Syrian Embassy in Dakar.	Iranian Oil Co. jointly owned by Iran, Senegal, and Shell.	Thousands of dollars of aid to Muslim community.	1984: Two delegations of Senegalese Muslim notables visited Tehran.
Sierra Leone	30	Iranian Embassy opened in 1983 under an Ambassador with a staff of eight.	1982: Oil agreement.	Assistance to Muslim community projects and sponsorship of hajj conferences in Freetown.	1984: Two Iranian delegations visit trade ministry and Acting President Koroma; Sierra Leone delegation headed by Foreign Minister visited Iran to discuss oil contracts.
Somalia	100	Iranian Embassy under an Ambassador with a staff of one. A Somali Embassy in Tehran as of 1983.	None.	None.	

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## Country Survey of Iranian Activity in Africa (continued)

	Percent Muslims	Diplomatic Relations	Trade	Economic Assistance	State Visits, Delegations
South Africa	1	Iranian Interests Section in Swiss Embassy in Pretoria; an unofficial South African consulate in Tehran.	Iran imports plastics, steel, vehicles, glass, food grains, arms, and oil via the spot market. Both deal through middlemen in Swaziland.	None.	
Swaziland	1-2	No relations.	None.	None.	1984: A member of the Iranian Interests Section in Pretoria visited Mbabane to propose establishing relations. The Swazis declined.
Tanzania	35	Iran has an Embassy with an Ambassador and two staff.	Oil agreements: 1983 and 1984.	Iranians have pledged to help construct new capital at Dodoma and to assist in oil exploration. Have aided Muslim community.	1984: Several visits by Foreign Ministries of both countries to the other's capital.
Zaire	10	Iranian Embassy under a charge. A Zairian Embassy in Tehran in 1983.	None.	None.	
Zambia	1-2	No relations.	1984: Some discussion of an Iranian oil proposal.	None.	1984: Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister seeking support for Iranian positions at the UN and for opening relations.
Zimbabwe	1-2	Iranian Embassy opened in 1982 under an Ambassador with staff of two.	1984: Discussion of oil deal and trade exchanges.	None.	1984: Iranian political-economic delegation visited Harare seeking to expand political, cultural, and economic ties and to gain agreement on international political issues.

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